

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) Implementation and its Impact on Women Development in Nigeria, 2000-2024.

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Abstract

This study examines the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nigeria, with a specific focus on its impact on women's development. The SDGs, adopted by the United Nations in 2015, provide a global framework for achieving a more equitable, prosperous, and sustainable world by 2030. Nigeria, like other countries, has committed to implementing these goals, recognizing their importance in addressing pressing national and global challenges. The study explores the progress made in implementing SDG 5 (Gender Equality) in Nigeria, highlighting the challenges faced by Nigerian women in achieving gender equality and empowerment. It examines the impact of SDG implementation on women's development, including their access to education, healthcare, economic opportunities, and decision-making positions. The findings of this study reveal that while Nigeria has made some progress in implementing the SDGs, significant challenges persist, including limited funding, cultural and social barriers, and inadequate data. The study also highlights the importance of gender-sensitive policies and practices in achieving sustainable development in Nigeria. The study concludes that the implementation of the SDGs has the potential to promote women's development in Nigeria, but it requires a concerted effort from government, civil society, and other stakeholders to address the challenges and barriers faced by women. The study recommends increased investment in education, healthcare, and economic empowerment programs for women, as well as policies and practices that promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

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**Related declarations are provided in the final section of this article.

Introduction.

The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the United Nations in 2015 marked a significant milestone in the global pursuit of sustainable development, with 17 goals aimed at transforming the world by 2030. Nigeria, as a signatory to the SDGs, has committed to implementing these goals, recognizing the imperative of inclusive and sustainable development, and their importance in addressing pressing national and global challenges. Among the 17 SDGs, Goal 5 specifically focuses on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, underscoring the critical role women play in sustainable development.

In Nigeria, women constitute a significant portion of the population and are integral to the country's economic, social, and cultural fabric. However, Nigerian women often face systemic barriers that limit their potential, including limited access to education, healthcare, economic opportunities, and decision-making roles. The implementation of the SDGs, particularly Goal 5, offers an opportunity to address these challenges and promote women's development in Nigeria.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), otherwise known as the Global Goals, are a set of objectives within a universal agreement to end poverty, protect all that makes the planet habitable, and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity, now and in the future. The Goals were adopted by all member states of the United Nations formally in 2015, for the period 2016–2030 to address the overwhelming empirical and scientific evidence that the world needs a radically more sustainable approach (Narayan *et al*, 2019). These 17 Goals focus on climate change, gender inequality, innovation, sustainable consumption, peace and justice, among other priorities. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emerged as a transformative global agenda to accelerate development and address the world's most pressing challenges. Building upon the lessons of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the SDGs are a comprehensive and ambitious global agenda aimed at addressing these challenges and fostering sustainable development worldwide. The universality of the SDGs fosters a sense of collective responsibility among all countries to work together towards a more just, equitable, and sustainable future by 2030. The SDGs replaced the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which started a global effort in 2000 to tackle the indignity of poverty.

Women Emancipation and Development in the Context of SDGs

Women emancipation and development hold paramount significance in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The pursuit of gender equality and women's

empowerment is not only a matter of human rights and social justice; it is also a strategic imperative for advancing sustainable development on a global scale. There is growing evidence of the synergies between gender equality, on the one hand, and economic, social and environmental sustainability, on the other. For example, when women have greater voice and participation in public administration, public resources are more likely to be allocated towards investments yet, this is also a time of opportunity. There are many examples around the world of alternative development pathways that move towards sustainability with gender equality. Gender equality and sustainable development can reinforce each other in powerful ways (Nelson, 2007).

Achieving gender equality and realizing the human rights, dignity and capabilities of diverse groups of women is a central requirement of a just and sustainable world in human development priorities, including child health, nutrition and access to employment. Ensuring women's access to and control over agricultural assets and productive resources is important for achieving food security and sustainable livelihoods. Women's knowledge, agency and collective action are central to finding, demonstrating and building more economically, socially and environmentally sustainable pathways to manage local landscapes; adapt to climate change; produce and access food; and secure sustainable water, sanitation and energy services.

Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria

Nigeria ratified and adopted the Agenda for implementation of the SDGs in September 2015 (UNBR, 2019). The country proceeded immediately to domesticate it. The domestication began with the data mapping of the SDGs with a view to identifying which agencies of government and other stakeholders could provide relevant and sustained data for tracking the implementation of the programme.

To spearhead SDG implementation, Nigeria established the Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Sustainable Development Goals (OSSAP-SDGs). This institutional framework played a pivotal role in coordinating and monitoring SDGs-related activities across various government ministries, departments, and agencies, fostering better policy coherence and synergy. The OSSAP-SDGs collaborates closely with state and local governments to ensure decentralized implementation and promote SDGs localization, recognizing the diverse needs and challenges faced by different regions and communities. Data-driven decision-making has been the cornerstone of Nigeria's SDGs implementation strategy. The government embarked on

comprehensive data mapping exercises to identify priority areas and assess progress towards the goals.

In its efforts to promote inclusivity and gender equality, Nigeria places a strong emphasis on SDG 5, which focuses on gender equality and women's empowerment. The government also initiated policies and programmes to protect women's rights, increase their representation in decision-making roles, and provide greater access to education and economic opportunities. These initiatives recognize the significant contribution of women to sustainable development and aim to ensure that women are active agents of change

Under President Muhammadu Buhari's administration (2015-2023), the federal government put some mechanisms in place to achieve the implementation of the SDGs 2030 target. The President appointed a woman (Orelope Adefulire) as Special Assistant to the President on SDGs in the Presidency. There was a Senate Committee on SDGs which provided oversight functions for SDGs while Federal House of Representatives Committee on SDGs provided appropriation for SDGs. The Federal Government worked together with the States Governments through their SDGs Desk Officers. These were the people that implemented the SDGs in their different states and local government areas. President Muhammadu Buhari's government introduced the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) in 2017 as a policy option. It was a medium-term all-round development initiative focused on restoring growth, investing in people and building a globally competitive economy. The focus was to stabilize the macro environment, achieve agriculture and food security, ensure energy sufficiency in power and petroleum products security, improve transformation, infrastructure and drive industrialization. It was expected to cover four years until 2020. This was where the implementation of sustainable development goals was anchored. In the course of delivering the MDGs, several partnerships were successfully established which supported the implementation of MDGs programmes and projects. The partnerships ranged from those that are internal between the Federal, State and Local Governments; between MDAs; between governments, civil society organizations and communities to partnerships between the Nigerian government and international aid agencies, private firms and foreign governments.

As posited by Equivirel (2016), economic development that is hinged on environmental sustainability is critical to the attainment of sustainable economic development. The quest for economic development must be balanced with the need for responsible environmental management. This balancing requires policies, legislations and regulations which improve

natural resource management and support sustainable resource use. The 17 goals to be implemented basically is to ensure zero hunger, good health and well-being, quality education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, affordable energy, decent work and economic growth, industry innovation and infrastructure, reduction of inequality, urgent action to combat climate change and its impact, promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, sustainable development among others. These goals capture the essence of development in any nation and have as its slogan to “leave no one behind”.

SDGs were expected to be pursued in an inclusive and people centered manner, hereby focusing on institutional and policy strengthening and supportive of the program and projects. This was designed to focus in six thematic area–policies, data management, institutions, partnership, communication and finance. To be carried out in 3 phases according to the specific need of each zone. Phase 1: 2016–2020. Phase 2: 2020–2026, Phase 3: 2026–2030. However, some hindrances were noticed which included inadequate financial resources for investment in SDGs–related activities, crisis in the North East, militancy in the Niger delta, corruption, unstable policies, weak social institutions and disregard to the rule of law.

COVID-19 impacted the Nigerian economy significantly. There was no money, food and freedom of movement to the extent that many Nigerians died because of the corona virus disease. Some Nigerians even attempted or actually committed suicide. The lockdown from March 2020 to September 2020 nearly collapsed the Nigerian economy. So, the Federal Government and State Governments were forced to divert attention to giving palliatives to the most vulnerable in the country. While the nation grappled with the pandemic, erosion killed many Nigerians while flooding swept away many farm lands during 2020 raining season (Narayan *et al*, 2019). The domestication of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Nigerian context was a strategic process that involves aligning the global goals with Nigeria’s national priorities, policies, and plans to drive sustainable development across the country. As a signatory to the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda, Nigeria has committed to achieving the 17 SDGs and their 169 targets by integrating them into its development framework.

The first step in domestication was the incorporation of the SDGs into Nigeria’s national development plans. Existing plans, such as Vision 20:2020 and the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP), are reviewed and adjusted to ensure that they are in line with the SDGs. This integration allows for a coherent and coordinated approach to address the goals’ diverse dimensions, ranging from poverty eradication and education to health, gender equality, and

environmental sustainability. The institutional framework for domestication was established through the Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Sustainable Development Goals (OSSAP-SDGs). This office plays a pivotal role in coordinating and monitoring SDGs-related activities across various government ministries, departments, and agencies. It serves as the central unit responsible for ensuring effective implementation and progress tracking. Localization is a crucial aspect of domestication, recognizing the diverse needs and challenges faced by different regions and communities in Nigeria. The government collaborates with state and local governments to adapt the SDGs to specific regional contexts, reflecting local priorities and engaging communities in the development process. This ensures that the goals resonate with the realities and aspirations of the Nigerian people.

Domestication involves engaging a wide range of stakeholders, including civil society organizations, the private sector, academia, and the media. Collaboration with diverse actors fosters ownership, generates innovative solutions, and encourages collective action towards achieving the SDGs. This inclusive approach aims to harness the collective wisdom, expertise, and resources of various sectors in driving sustainable development. Addressing Nigeria's unique sustainable development challenges, such as poverty, unemployment, insecurity, and environmental degradation, is an essential part of the domestication process. Specific policies and programs are designed to tackle these challenges while staying true to the broader vision of sustainable development.

Nigeria's 2017 VNR outlined the institutional dimensions for creating an enabling policy environment for the implementation of the SDGs through its Economic and Recovery Growth Plan (ERGP) (2017-2020). The ERGP's focus on economic, social and environmental dimensions of development makes it consistent with the aspirations of the SDGs.

SDG3 - Health and Wellbeing: While Nigeria has some poor health outcomes, such as high rates of maternal mortality; there have been improvements in the under-five mortality rates (from 157 to 132). COVID-19 has challenged our public health system. A key lesson in protecting the public in times of such pandemics is hygiene and the need to prioritize universal access to clean water and soap. Nigeria's current access to basic drinking water stands at 64%. There must be more investment in public health and to ensure the most vulnerable are reached through universal access to essential services.

SDG4 - Education: A key challenge confronting the country has to do with Out-of-School-Children, a demographic challenge that relates to interplay between employment (SDG-8), education (SDG-4), poverty (SDG-1) and the digital economy (SDG-17). With a population of approximately 200 million people, regional disparities are significant, with 78% of South Western children able to read full or part sentences, while only 17% of North Eastern children can. With only 1.6% of GDP devoted to education, the country needs to increase the resources to provide quality education.

SDG8 - Inclusive Economy: In terms of inclusive economy (SDG-8), Nigeria's informal economy is one of the largest on the continent – estimated at 53% of the Labour force and accounting for 65% of GDP. It is estimated that 75% of all new jobs are informal. Youth have a combined unemployment and under-employment rate of 55.4% or 24.5 million. This is the youth bulge that needs to be building the required skills to move into secure and less precarious forms of employment. Ensuring youth are well-educated and able to transition to productive employment through the digital economy can help reduce poverty (SDG-1) and help diversify growth beyond dependence on oil and gas. The Generation Unlimited intervention, which targets employment for 20 million youth, is another good example. The banking sector can play an important role in supporting the country's efforts to leverage greater private sector-led growth by providing access to finance, particularly for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). In addition, the Nigerian government can dramatically shift to digitization and strengthening its transition to e-government to facilitate its social protection to the poor and vulnerable population.

Alignment of national planning to SDGs: Good strides were made in the domestication process of the SDGs in Nigeria. First, there was realignment of the National Statistical System (NSS) with the requirements and Indicators of the SDGs. Second, Nigeria developed its home-grown 'Integrated Sustainable Development Goals (iSDG Model)' – an analytical framework for assessing how policy making can better address the indivisible nature of the SDGs. Third, the Nigeria's 2020 VNR report had drawn on past evaluations across the Seven priority SDGs and an evaluation of the country's performance in SDG 3 & 4. The use of evaluations were innovation in the VNR context. Nigeria strengthened the evidence-based planning and accountability mechanisms at State level for accelerating the SDG decade of action.

Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Northern Nigeria

The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Northern Nigeria presented both opportunities and challenges as the region grapples with complex socio-economic, environmental, and cultural dynamics. Comprising 19 states and a significant portion of Nigeria's population, Northern Nigeria is vital to the country's overall development. The 19 States include Adamawa, Bauchi, Benue, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau, Sokoto, Taraba, Yobe, and Zamfara States. However, the region faces various development obstacles, including high levels of poverty, inadequate access to quality education and healthcare, gender disparities, food insecurity, and environmental degradation. To effectively implement the SDGs in Northern Nigeria, a multi-faceted approach was adopted, taking into account the region's specific needs and aspirations.

Addressing poverty was a primary concern, and SDG 1 (No Poverty) assumed particular significance. Targeted poverty reduction programmes, social safety nets, and investments in income-generating activities uplifted the vulnerable populations and improved their livelihoods to a large extent. SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) was integrated to bridge the socio-economic gaps and promote inclusive growth. Improving access to quality education and healthcare was another critical aspect of SDGs implementation in Northern Nigeria, encompassing SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and SDG 4 (Quality Education). There was Investments in infrastructure, teacher training, healthcare facilities, and maternal and child health services which were crucial in enhancing human capital development and well-being in the region. Gender equality, embodied in SDG 5, is imperative to empower women and girls in Northern Nigeria. Efforts were made to promote girls' education, creating economic opportunities for women, and combating gender-based violence. This contributed immensely to greater gender parity and social progress.

Furthermore, partnerships were leveraged with international organizations, civil society, private sector, and development partners which were crucial in mobilizing resources and expertise to support the region's development initiatives.

Between 2019 and 2024, a record number of projects were implemented, aimed at providing essential services to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs. In the education sector, 8,008 classrooms were constructed and 305 were renovated with furnishing to strengthen basic education across the country. A total of 4,845 Desktop and Laptop Computers were supplied to

schools across the country for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) training. In the health sector, 195 Health Centres, comprising Primary Healthcare Centres (PHC) and Mother and Child Centres (MCC) were constructed, complemented with the supply of 199 Intensive Care and Rural ambulances. About 257 incubators and 7,464 regular and automated hospital beds were supplied across health facilities. In other cross-cutting sectors, OSSAP-SDGs constructed 66 Vocational and Skills Acquisition Centres; supplied 1,294 transformers; the provision of 19,266 solar-powered streetlights; 300 Housing units for internally displaced persons (IDP) in Borno State; and 925 Solar Boreholes, in addition to several other interventions (Adama,2023).

The implementation of the SDGs in Northern Nigeria necessitated a comprehensive and context-specific approach that addresses the region's unique challenges and opportunities. By aligning with national plans, focusing on poverty reduction, education, healthcare, gender equality, environmental conservation, inclusive governance, and fostering partnerships, Northern Nigeria can make significant strides towards sustainable development and improve the well-being of its people. Moreover, the successful implementation of the SDGs in the region will contribute to Nigeria's overall progress in achieving the 2030 Agenda and realizing a more equitable, prosperous, and sustainable future for all.

In the Northern region of Nigeria, desertification poses a significant threat, exacerbated by heavy fuel wood harvesting, poor farming practices, and annual bush burning, resulting in the degradation of land. On the other hand, in eastern Nigeria, heavy gully erosion and overpopulation are prevalent, leading to a deteriorating rural and agrarian sector, widespread poverty among rural communities, a heavy reliance on food imports, and ineffective implementation of agrarian policies. Consequently, rural areas have witnessed the emergence of a significant number of bandits, further exacerbating the challenges faced by these regions. The degradation of rural sectors has led to a depletion of rural capital resources, hindering their development. The Nigerian government embarked on tree planting campaign to combat desert encroachment which destroyed arable farmlands for farming and grazing animals (Ibrahim, 2023).

Even in the industrial and modern sectors, the society's pursuit of quick profits has led to a disregard for standards, particularly evident in the emission of toxic materials into the environment. This trend has resulted in the production and importation of sub-standard goods, further contributing to environmental degradation. In Nigeria, the consequences of

environmental degradation go beyond compromising the quality of life; they directly threaten human life itself. The degradation of ecosystems, coupled with the overexploitation of natural resources, has put the country's environment in a critical state, with adverse effects on the health and well-being of its people.

Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Southern Nigeria

Southern Nigeria consists of 17 states which include Abia, Akwa-Ibom, Anambra, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Ebonyi, Edo, Ekiti, Enugu, Imo, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Oyo, Rivers States. In Southern Nigeria, the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) during the stated period had been a crucial endeavor to address various economic, social, and environmental challenges while fostering sustainable development. As a region with a diverse population, rich natural resources, and significant economic activities, Southern Nigeria faces unique opportunities and obstacles in achieving the SDGs.

One of the primary areas of focus in the region's SDG implementation was poverty alleviation and economic development. Despite being home to major urban centers and thriving industries, there are still pockets of poverty and inequality that require attention. Initiatives aimed at empowering marginalized communities, promoting entrepreneurship, and improving access to quality education and healthcare have been at the forefront of efforts to reduce poverty and boost economic growth.

Sustainable infrastructure development was another crucial aspect of the SDG implementation in Southern Nigeria. Investments in transportation, energy, and information technology have been necessary to enhance connectivity, efficiency, and overall quality of life. By improving infrastructure, the region is better equipped to attract investments, spur economic activities, and enhance the overall well-being of its citizens.

In tackling environmental challenges, Southern Nigeria placed significant emphasis on sustainable natural resource management and climate action. The region is home to valuable ecosystems, such as the Niger Delta, which requires careful protection and rehabilitation to preserve biodiversity and ensure the livelihoods of local communities that depend on these resources. Implementation of renewable energy projects, waste management schemes, and reforestation initiatives have been essential to combat climate change and promote environmental sustainability.

Healthcare and education were central to the SDG implementation agenda in Southern Nigeria. By improving access to quality healthcare services and promoting health awareness campaigns, the region aims to reduce maternal and child mortality rates, combat infectious diseases, and improve overall public health. In education, efforts were made to enhance access to quality schooling and vocational training to equip the workforce with the necessary skills for the future job market, reducing the disparities in educational opportunities.

One critical challenge in implementing the SDGs in Southern Nigeria was ensuring effective governance and coordination among various stakeholders, including government agencies, civil society organizations, and the private sector. Adequate monitoring, evaluation, and data collection mechanisms were instrumental in tracking progress and identifying areas that require additional attention and resources.

Furthermore, engaging the local communities and incorporating their perspectives in the planning and execution of SDG initiatives had been vital for sustainable development in the region. By involving the people who are directly affected by the projects, there is a better chance of generating solutions that are contextually relevant and socially inclusive.

Impact of SDGs on Women Development in Nigeria.

The implementation of Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria impacted positively on women development in Nigeria, during the period of our study. The SDGs have clear and very straightforward targets aiming to improve the quality of life and living conditions for all. SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), hold great promise in advancing women's empowerment and fostering gender equality. The SDGs were implemented by the Nigerian government to a large extent.

Implementation of the SDGs improved women participation in politics in the country. Many Nigerian women were given opportunities to participate in politics. Many women were elected and appointed into powerful political offices across the country. In Kogi State, a woman was appointed as the Secretary to the State Government, a position hitherto reserved for men. A total of sixty-four (64) women were elected into the Legislature in states and at the federal level (Kalu, 2023). The impact of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on women's participation in politics was transformative, paving the way for greater gender equality and women's empowerment in political spheres worldwide. SDG 5, which specifically targets gender equality and women's empowerment, has been instrumental in driving positive changes in

policies, institutions, and societal attitudes towards women's political engagement. As a result of the SDGs' emphasis on gender equality, many countries have introduced legislative reforms such as gender quotas and affirmative action policies to increase women's representation in political decision-making bodies. This has led to a significant rise in the number of women elected to parliament and other leadership positions, thereby breaking down long-standing barriers that hindered women's entry into politics.

Rotimi (2016) identifies the political dimension as one of the five main dimensions of women's empowerment, noting that the economic and social/cultural dimensions tend to be over-represented in the literature compared to the political, psychological and legal dimensions. His review notes that most of the literature focuses on psychological empowerment, which encompasses political efficacy alongside collective efficacy, outcome efficacy, critical thinking ability and participatory behaviour. These differences in definitions affect the comparability and meta-analysis of studies exploring the impact of women's empowerment on health. They also make it harder to draw general conclusions as to the impact of women's empowerment on specific outcomes, such as child health. As noted by Kabeer (2015), the SDGs sparked the creation of women-focused leadership training and mentorship programs, providing women with the skills and confidence needed to become effective political leaders. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and women's rights groups were also spurred by the SDGs to advocate for women's political participation, creating a more inclusive and diverse political landscape. Media visibility for women in politics has increased as the SDGs brought greater attention to the importance of women's representation and achievements in the political arena. Besides, the recognition of youth engagement in the SDGs has resulted in efforts to involve young women in political activities and leadership roles, fostering the next generation of female political leaders.

Women's increased participation in politics contributed to strengthening democracy, as their involvement in decision-making processes led to more inclusive policies that address a broader range of societal needs. However, despite these positive impacts, challenges persist, including social and cultural barriers, discriminatory practices, and stereotyping that continue to limit women's political engagement. Continued efforts and commitments from governments, civil society, and international organizations are essential to overcome these obstacles and ensure that women's voices are fully represented in political decision-making processes worldwide. Empowering women politically is not only a matter of justice and equality but also a fundamental requirement for achieving sustainable and inclusive development for all.

Implementation of the SDGs in Nigeria also improved economic fortunes of women and the vulnerable in the society. The economic impact of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on women in Nigeria during the period were multi-faceted, driving positive changes in various aspects of their economic empowerment and well-being. SDGs such as SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) played crucial roles in shaping policies and initiatives that address gender disparities and promote women's economic participation. More women focused on investments. They invested in their households' education, health, and nutrition more than men, creating secure foundations for their families and communities. In addition, women's involvement in trade created jobs, equitable income distribution, gender equality and inclusive growth, as women-led businesses tend to employ more women. For instance, in Nigeria, women in SMEs contributed to 50% of the nation's GDP with a higher percentage of employment creation. These, put together, are absolute means of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

SDG 1, which aims to eradicate poverty, led to the implementation of targeted poverty alleviation programs that specifically addressed the needs of women living in poverty. By providing access to financial resources, micro-credit facilities, and entrepreneurship training, these initiatives successfully empowered women to engage in income-generating activities, lift themselves out of poverty, and contribute to household and community economic development.

SDG 5, centered on gender equality and women's empowerment, has been instrumental in dismantling barriers that hinder women's economic progress. It has influenced policy changes that promote equal opportunities for women in education, employment, and entrepreneurship. This has resulted in improved access to quality education for girls, enhancing their human capital and employment prospects. Additionally, gender-responsive labor market policies have emerged, encouraging women's participation in various industries and sectors, leading to increased economic productivity and growth.

SDG 8, focusing on decent work and economic growth, has contributed to creating an enabling environment for women in Nigeria's workforce. Efforts to eliminate gender-based discrimination in the workplace and ensure equal pay for equal work improved women's working conditions and economic standing. This has positively impacted household incomes and increased women's financial independence, enabling them to make more significant contributions to their families and communities.

Moreover, the SDGs encouraged the development of women-led businesses and entrepreneurship. With increased access to finance, training, and mentorship opportunities, women entrepreneurs in Nigeria have been able to establish and grow their enterprises, creating employment opportunities and driving economic growth (Battersby, 2017). Furthermore, the SDGs drew attention to the importance of women's participation in agriculture, a vital sector in Nigeria's economy. Women are significant contributors to agricultural production, and the recognition of their role led to investments in women-centered agricultural programs, including access to modern farming techniques, credit, and marketing support. This improved agricultural productivity, food security, and rural livelihoods.

Despite these positive impacts, challenges persist. Women in Nigeria continue to face gender-based violence, limited access to resources, and cultural barriers that hinder their economic progress. Additionally, there is a need for greater efforts to close the gender gap in access to finance and decision-making positions within the private sector. The SDGs have had a significant economic impact on women in Nigeria, promoting their economic empowerment, fostering gender equality, and contributing to overall economic growth and development. As the country continues its efforts towards achieving the SDGs, it is essential to sustain and strengthen the gains made so far and address the remaining challenges to ensure that women's economic potential is fully realized for the benefit of all Nigerians and the nation's sustainable development.

As a consequence, gender disparity significantly impacts women's involvement in sustainable development efforts. Many of their roles are traditionally confined to domestic settings, limiting their access to economic, political, and social opportunities. To achieve true sustainable development, it is imperative to address these gender disparities and create a more inclusive and equitable environment where women can actively contribute to all aspects of society. By empowering women through education, promoting gender equality, and removing discriminatory barriers, societies can unlock the immense potential that women hold as key drivers of sustainable development. Only by actively involving and valuing the contributions of women can we create a more prosperous and harmonious future for all.

The socio-cultural impact of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on Nigerian women had been profound, challenging traditional norms and promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. SDG 5, which specifically focuses on gender equality and women's empowerment, has played a central role in reshaping societal attitudes towards women and their

roles in various spheres of life. One of the most significant impacts of the SDGs on Nigerian women has been the increased recognition of their rights and the importance of their active participation in decision-making processes. Efforts to achieve gender equality have led to the promotion of women's education, providing them with more opportunities to pursue higher education and gain skills and knowledge to enter the workforce and leadership positions. This has not only empowered women individually but has also contributed to breaking down gender stereotypes and promoting the idea that women can excel in any field they choose.

The SDGs have also addressed the issue of violence against women, bringing it to the forefront of public discourse and policy agendas. Increased awareness about gender-based violence has led to the enactment of laws and the establishment of support systems to protect women from abuse and discrimination. In addition, women's participation in peace-building and conflict resolution initiatives has been recognized as crucial for sustainable development and social cohesion. Apparently, the cultural impact of the SDGs can be seen in the growing acceptance of women's agency and their right to make decisions about their own lives. Traditional gender roles that confined women to specific domestic spheres have been challenged, leading to greater support for women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship. Women are increasingly viewed as contributors to the economy and agents of change, rather than solely as caregivers and homemakers (Brambilla *et al*, 2016).

Furthermore, the SDGs have encouraged the involvement of men and boys in promoting gender equality. The notion of "he or she" has gained momentum, encouraging men to become allies in the fight for women's rights and challenging harmful cultural practices that perpetuate gender inequality. While progress has been made, challenges persist, particularly in rural areas where deeply entrenched cultural norms may hinder women's empowerment. Women still face barriers in accessing resources and opportunities, such as land ownership and credit facilities, which limit their economic participation. Moreover, gender stereotypes and biases in the workplace continue to impact women's career advancement and leadership opportunities. Sanni noted that this can be redressed through intentional inclusivity of women in the scheme of things and then an aggressive awareness be created among the locals and the general populace to accept the new normal.

The socio-cultural impact of the SDGs on Nigerian women has been a mixed but generally positive one. The goals have brought attention to women's rights and empowerment, challenging traditional norms and promoting gender equality. By addressing issues such as violence against

women, promoting women's education, and encouraging men's involvement in gender equality, the SDGs have laid the groundwork for a more inclusive and equitable society in Nigeria. However, continued efforts and strong commitment from all stakeholders, including the government, civil society, and communities, are essential to overcome the remaining challenges and achieve true gender equality and women's empowerment in the country (Briant, 2017).

Challenges and Prospects

Nigeria, like many other African countries, has undertaken efforts to promote gender equity by committing to various international, continental, sub-regional, and national agreements. The federal government of Nigeria initiated a national policy on women in 2000, aiming to address the imbalance of roles between men and women in sustainable development. However, as this disparity persisted, a new policy was adopted, known as the national gender policy, in 2006. This policy aligns with important international and national instruments, including the Beijing Platform for Action, New Partnership for Africa Development (NEPAD), All Solemn Declaration for Gender Equity, Africa Protocol on People's Rights and Rights of Women, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), among others. Despite these commitments, challenges persist in effectively implementing the policy and translating it into concrete programs that promote equality in Nigeria's development approach. The gap between policy intent and action remains a significant obstacle in achieving gender equity. There is a need for more focused efforts, resource allocation, and systematic measures to bridge this implementation gap and realize the desired outcomes of gender equality and women's empowerment. Continued advocacy, stakeholder engagement, and collaboration are vital to ensure that gender policies are effectively implemented, leading to tangible advancements in women's rights and opportunities in Nigeria.

Research indicates that the status of women significantly impacts their involvement in development. Traditionally, women have been highly regarded for their domestic roles rather than their economic, political, and social positions, even though they are primary and often unseen contributors to food production. For instance, among the Urhobo people of Delta state, less than 20% of men engage in non-rural economic and socio-political activities, while over 90% of women are involved in direct food production and petty trading. In the political sphere, women have historically played limited roles. It was only after Nigeria's independence that the federal government began appointing women to policy-making functions, dating back to 1976. Despite women's significant contributions to society, especially prior to independence, the

overall percentage of female political officeholders, both in appointive and elective positions, remains low in the current democratic era. Although there has been a slight increase, it still falls far below the 30% threshold recommended by policy frameworks like the platform for action and the national gender policy.

To ensure meaningful progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment, it is essential to challenge traditional gender norms and increase women's representation in economic, political, and social spheres. Bridging the gap between men and women's involvement in diverse non-rural economic activities and political leadership is crucial for achieving sustainable development and creating a more inclusive and equitable society (Akosile,2018). Encouraging women's active participation in decision-making and policy formulation processes is vital to harnessing their potential as key drivers of development in Nigeria. By addressing gender disparities and implementing policies that promote women's empowerment, Nigeria can move closer to achieving gender equality and unlocking the full potential of its female population for the betterment of the nation as a whole.

The economic empowerment of women is hindered by their occupation and lack of formal education. In certain regions of Delta and Edo states in Nigeria, more than 70% of farmers are rural women and girls engaged in various farming activities, from clearing land to marketing and storing food products. These women primarily rely on traditional indigenous skills since many of them lack formal education, leading to limited economic gains and perpetuating their poverty. It has been observed that gender disparity benefits men who hold political control, further exacerbating the situation. Within households, male dominance disadvantages mothers compared to fathers and girls compared to boys. Despite fulfilling multiple roles such as domestic work, food production, family responsibilities, childbearing, and care, women generally bear the brunt of extreme poverty.

To improve the economic status of women, it is essential to address these challenges and provide opportunities for education and skill development. Empowering women with formal education and modern agricultural techniques can enhance their productivity and economic contributions. Moreover, promoting gender equality in decision-making processes and property rights can empower women to have more control over their economic outcomes. By empowering women economically, Nigeria can harness the untapped potential of its female population and foster inclusive development, benefiting both women and society as a whole (Oleribe, 2016).

As noted by Ogunaike (2021), Nigeria, the most populated African nation, is unfortunately plagued by poverty and various reproductive health challenges, particularly affecting women and children. With 75 million Nigerians living in poverty, 7 million children dying before the age of five, and at least three million people living with HIV/AIDS, there is a pressing need to address these issues. Nigeria's mortality rate ranks second highest in the world, with approximately 1,100 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births. These alarming statistics reflect the urgent need to improve reproductive health for women and children. A significant factor impacting the role of women in sustainable development is education. In many countries, including Nigeria, girls continue to experience higher school dropout rates compared to boys. This is due to cultural norms that prioritize boys' education over girls', often resulting in early marriages for girls. Consequently, girls' education is undervalued, hindering their active participation in sustainable development efforts.

Recognizing the factors affecting women's roles in sustainable development, there is a growing call for women's liberation and empowerment. Awareness plays a critical role in driving sustainable development, and empowering women through education and reproductive health support is a key to achieving positive change (Agarwal, 2018). By focusing on improving women's health and education, Nigeria can unlock the potential of its female population, leading to more inclusive and prosperous sustainable development. Empowering women in these aspects will not only benefit them individually but also contribute to the overall progress and well-being of the nation.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it can be concluded that implementation of the SDGs has impacted positively on women development in Nigeria to a large extent. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have brought about significant and transformative impacts on women's development in Nigeria across various dimensions. The SDGs have promoted gender equality, women's empowerment, and also addressed other unique challenges faced by women in the country. The comprehensive nature of the SDGs has ensured that women's development is addressed, considering social, political, economic, and cultural barriers. The impact of the SDGs on women's participation in politics has been profound, leading to increased representation and active engagement of women in political decision-making processes. Through legislative reforms, policy changes, and empowerment initiatives, women have gained a foothold in political leadership, contributing to more inclusive and representative governance in Nigeria.

Economically, the SDGs have played a pivotal role in empowering women in Nigeria. By promoting women's economic participation, supporting women-owned businesses, and eliminating gender-based discrimination in the workplace, the SDGs have contributed to women's economic empowerment and enhanced their financial independence. This, in turn, has led to greater economic growth and development in the country.

The socio-cultural impact of the SDGs on Nigerian women is evident in the shifting societal attitudes towards women's rights, roles, and contributions. The goals have challenged traditional gender norms and harmful practices, leading to increased recognition of women's agency and their right to equal opportunities in education, employment, and decision-making. The cultural landscape is gradually becoming more inclusive and supportive of women's empowerment.

The impact of the SDGs on women's development in Nigeria is vast and far-reaching. The goals have laid the foundation for positive change, creating an enabling environment for women's advancement and empowerment in various aspects of life.

Nevertheless, there are still challenges to overcome, and sustained efforts are necessary to ensure that the gains made so far are consolidated and expanded. Collaborative efforts from the government, civil society, private sector, and international organizations are crucial in driving forward the progress towards achieving gender equality and women's empowerment as envisioned. In the SDGs. By collectively working towards these goals, Nigeria can unlock the full potential of its women, fostering sustainable and inclusive development for the betterment of all.

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